philosophy

Undergraduate Course Offerings

Fall 2020
Basic Philosophical Questions  This prerequisite to all other philosophy courses gives you an initial understanding of what philosophy is, the range of questions philosophers take up, and how they deal with those questions.

**UCOR 132**  
**Logic**  Logic is the branch of philosophy that studies the structure of arguments. In this course we will consider what makes a good argument—and learn how arguments go bad. We will also examine formal rules of inference and learn to identify informal fallacies. By the end of this course, you will be able to recognize valid and invalid arguments, as well as strong and weak ones, and be better able to formulate good arguments of your own.

**PHIL 106**  
**Philosophical Ethics**  What is happiness? What are virtue and vice? Can virtue be taught? How do we make decisions regarding good and bad, right and wrong? This course is an opportunity to delve into the ethical ideas that inform our lives, by looking at a selection of classic works from the Western philosophical tradition, including texts by ancient, modern, and contemporary thinkers.

**UCOR 151**  
**Introduction to Phenomenology**  Phenomenology investigates the transcendental structures of experience, synthesizing subjectivity and objectivity. By reading great figures in phenomenology (Husserl, Heidegger, de Beauvoir, Lingis, and others), we investigate a wide range of experience: from perspective to time, from the environment to care, from boredom to the experience of historical destiny, from the experience of prayer to the experience of cultural conflict, from making music to communication with people we have almost nothing in common with.

**PHIL 200W/328W**  
**Philosophy & Literature: Philosophical Shakespeare**  We’ll read and watch Shakespeare’s plays with an eye to his philosophical insights, and read philosophical texts about the plays.
**African Philosophy**  We begin with Ancient Egyptian Pyramid texts concerning justice and the soul, cosmogony, and the relations between humans and gods. We then jump up to post-colonial African philosophers, dealing with such topics as reason and culture, time and destiny, witchcraft and aesthetics, religion and modernism, ethics and community, politics and the philosophy of history. We then move to Fanon’s great work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, which engages with the de-colonization of African nations: politically, existentially, aesthetically, and psychologically. Finally, we discuss very current ideas, from ‘Afropessimism’ and ‘necropolitics’ to ‘Afrotopia’ and ‘cosmopolitanism.’

(Enrollment is restricted to members of the Africa Learning Community.)

**Yoga Philosophy & Practice**  Is the practice of yoga a form of philosophy? How do Western and Eastern traditions understand and make use of the mind and the body? We will investigate these questions by looking at classical yoga texts and contemporary philosophy of the body, dividing our time equally between classroom discussion and studio practice. No previous experience with yoga is necessary.

**Exploring Social Justice**  Philosophical discussions of social justice inquire into the nature and current state of justice in areas of social concern. This course explores core areas: class, race, immigration, healthcare, the global environment, and gender. At the center of our exploration will be an examination of how the value of human dignity can inform our approach.

(Enrollment is restricted to Nursing students.)

**Black Mirror & Philosophy**  We will use texts from the history of Western philosophy, and some from recent authors, to understand the deep and timely Netflix series,
Black Mirror. We will also use episodes to illustrate and interrogate the philosophical texts. We will thus learn some of the most interesting and influential philosophical ideas ever conceived, and also how these ideas are as important now as when they were first written. Black Mirror presents a dark image of our own times, and philosophy is as urgent a tool for living in them as it always has been.

**Phil 239/434-01  TR 10:50–12:05**  Dr Miller

**Health Care Ethics** Ethical questions in medical care and research, e.g., doctor–patient relations, informed consent, euthanasia, and the definitions of health, person, and death.

**Animals in Antiquity** Exploration of the roles played by non-human animals in the lives and thought of the Greeks and Romans. Particular attention will be paid to classical views on the intellectual and ethical dimensions of non-human animals as these are revealed in Greek and Roman philosophical and natural historical texts, but literary texts will be examined as well. In addition to analyzing the place of non-human animals in classical philosophical and scientific thought, the course will investigate the part played by animals in the areas of religious ceremony, entertainment, food choices, hunting, warfare, and domestic companionship.

**Phil 254  MWF 12–12:50**  Dr Newmyer

**Philosophy of Law** A study of major legal traditions with consideration of such topics as justice, ethics and law, legal reasoning, and philosophical issues in evidence and procedure.

**Phil 260W  MWF 12–12:50**  Dr Bjalobok

**Philosophy of Nature** We habitually think of philosophy as among the humanities, while questions about the natural world fall within the domain of the sciences. Yet how can any lover of wisdom wonder about everything except the whole of nature? This course will consider the mind’s access to the natural world, the relationship between philosophy and natural science, change and its causes, chance and the
principle of simplicity, the relation of the artificial to the natural, and problems about motion, place, and time. The pre-Socratics and Aristotle will guide our investigations.

**Medieval Philosophy** A sampling of Christian and Islamic thought from late antiquity through the 13th century, with emphasis on the continuity, development, and fruitful interplay of the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions. We will weigh the difficulty of assimilating this complex pagan heritage within the context of revealed religion and consider how medieval thinkers worked toward a solution in connection with such themes as knowledge, God's existence, the problem of evil, the relation between divine and natural causes, and the soul.

**Contemporary Philosophy** Philosophy from 1900 to the present, with a particular focus on the movements of phenomenology, existentialism, and analytic philosophy.

**Internship** Our internship program provides you with an avenue to contact potential employers, to learn with on-the-job training, and to bolster your résumé or curriculum vitae for future endeavors, all while doing something worthwhile. Contact the instructor as soon as possible for an overview of the application process.

**Zen Philosophy** An immersion in the extraordinary collection of Zen koans known as the *Blue Cliff Record*. Part poetry, part philosophy, part history, and always revolutionary, the *Blue Cliff Record* aims less at understanding than at personal transformation. We will supplement our reading of the koans with background reading on Zen philosophy by both its practitioners and critics. We will also practice a simple form of meditation as a complement to our meditative reading of the text.
Special Topics:  Kant—Religion within the Bounds of Reason  A critical study of Kant’s most famous work on religion.

PHIL 434-02/639  F 11–1:40  Dr Bates

Marxism & Critical Theory  The development of political economy by Marx in the 19th century, and its subsequent impact on the development of critical theories of psychology, aesthetics, and society by critical theorists in the 20th and 21st centuries.

PHIL 493/593  TR 5–6:15  Dr Swindal

Special Topics:  Queer Theory & Trans Studies  Sexuality, gender, and embodiment have been understood in dramatically new ways since the mid-20th century. This course begins with an overview of Foucault’s and Butler’s important reactions against traditional understandings of sexuality, gender, and embodiment, and an examination of their philosophical arguments. Then we turn to the movements of queer theory and transgender studies, looking at how they each developed, the philosophical analyses and discussions within each area, and the dialogues—and criticisms—between these two regions of study.

PHIL 496-01/640  TR 10:50–12:05  Dr Rodemeyer

For many courses, more details will be posted outside of the Department (303 College Hall) and at duq.edu/philosophy.

Undergraduate Philosophy Society

The Duquesne Philosophy Society meets each week for student-led discussions of texts and ideas. Write to duqphil society@gmail.com for information about meeting times and events.